

### Questions on Abu El-Haj and Eriksen 147-173 (Minorities and the State)

1. On p. 166 Abu El-Haj describes rumors to the effect that an archaeologist was murdered because he had “found something” that “undermined ‘their’ entire historiography of ancient Jerusalem.” Under what circumstances can archaeological findings hypothetically pose this kind of “subversive” threat, if any?
2. What were your reactions to reading an article about Jerusalem archaeology written by someone named Nadia Abu El-Haj? Would you have read the essay any differently had it been authored by someone named, say, Jeff Goldblum?
3. Abu El-Haj makes some pretty sweeping claims for the role of archaeology in nation-building. Which points do you agree with? Disagree with?
4. Think of a hypothetical case in another country where archaeology might be as important as Abu El-Haj says it is for Israel.
5. Provide two cases involving competing nationalist narratives about the past—from the course readings or your own experience—and discuss them.
6. In her essay Abu El-Haj’s political and moral position is evident. To what degree, in your opinion, does this affect the impact of the evidence she provides and her arguments?
7. Abu El-Haj states that her larger concern is to examine

...the workings of science in processes of cultural production, examining the practices and context through which forms and embodiments of knowledge can fashion national imaginations, realize colonial projects, and become the terms and the signs through which struggles for the present are waged. (p. 167)

Do you see archaeology as science? List all the ways you can think of that archaeology can be involved in colonial or nationalist projects. Provide examples from course materials.

8. Describe Abu El-Haj’s evidence for the claims she makes about Israeli archaeologists’ selective excavation techniques and decisions—their privileging of certain archaeological traditions.
9. “I want to understand how knowledge is power, how it actually helps to ‘change the reality we encounter’” (p. 169). Provide two examples, from this essay or other source.
10. On p. 169 Abu El-Haj writes of “the nationalist mythology...” Do you agree with her use of this word? What does “mythology” mean here?

11. What other countries have a “monumental national past” (p. 171) that is available through archaeological sites and objects (material culture)?
12. Abu El-Haj discusses some people’s assumptions that archaeologists would *naturally* be nationalistic in their interests and practices (p. 174). Discuss.
13. What *is* “the appropriate relationship one should have to one’s own archaeological past”? (p. 174)
14. Compare the planning of the new Jewish Quarter to Handler’s discussion of lawmakers’ decision-making about how to reconstruct a section of Old Quebec.
15. List the ways states have dealt with their minorities. (Eriksen pp. 149-150)
16. Discuss the way modernization is producing an “ethnicization” of the world. (p. 151)
17. Discuss minority elites. (p. 150)
18. Why, do you think, is “indigenous” such a contested term? (p. 152). Provide a definition that works for you.
19. Compare Eriksen’s discussion of Sami political organizing with the essay by Laura Graham we read for Nov. 28.
20. Eriksen says that in many cases “certain aspects of modernisation are required for identity maintenance to be successful.” (p. 154) What are these?
21. Eriksen speaks of the reification of culture, “culture as a thing.” (p. 155-156) What does this mean? What does non-reified culture look like? Bring in Nagel if you can.
22. “Leaders of a dominated group must master the cultural codes of the dominant group in order to present their case efficiently.” (p. 156) Compare Eriksen to Laura Graham with respect to this issue.
23. What’s the distinction between tradition and traditionalism? (p. 158)
24. What are the political and moral dangers associated with an analytical emphasis on cultural differences between groups? (p. 165)

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